IN THE CLAIMS

Please amend the claims as follows:

Claim 1 (Original): A method for preserving a catalyst comprising maintaining a phosphorus-molybdenum-vanadium catalyst containing phosphorus, molybdenum and vanadium retained in a reactor under a condition of a water content of 30 mg or less per 1 g of catalyst dry weight, before the start of the reaction or during the stop of the reaction.

Claim 2 (Original): The method for preserving a catalyst according to Claim 1, wherein a retaining temperature of said catalyst is 0 °C or higher and not higher than the calcination temperature in catalyst production.

Claim 3 (Original): The method for preserving a catalyst according to Claim 1, wherein a retaining temperature of said catalyst is 15 °C or higher and 150 °C or lower.

Claim 4 (Original): The method for preserving a catalyst according to Claim 1, wherein a water concentration in gas in said reactor is 1 vol% or less.

Claim 5 (Original): The method for preserving a catalyst according to Claim 1, wherein a water concentration in gas in said reactor is 0.5 vol% or less.

Claim 6 (Original): The method for preserving a catalyst according to Claim 1, wherein a retaining temperature of said catalyst is 0 °C or higher and not higher than the calcination temperature in catalyst production, and a water concentration in gas in said reactor is 1 vol% or less.

Claim 7 (Original): The method for preserving a catalyst according to Claim 1, wherein a retaining temperature of said catalyst is 15 °C or higher and 150 °C or lower, and a water concentration in gas in said reactor is 0.5 vol% or less.

Claim 8 (Original): The method for preserving a catalyst according to Claim 6, wherein said temperature of the catalyst is retained 0 °C or higher and not higher than the calcination temperature in catalyst production, and the gas having a water concentration of 0.8 vol% or less and containing substantially no component lowering a catalytic performance is allowed to pass through in said reactor.

Claim 9 (Original): The method for preserving a catalyst according to Claim 8, wherein the gas to be passed through in the reactor is an inert gas or oxidizing gas.

Claim 10 (Original): The method for preserving a catalyst according to Claim 9, wherein the gas to be passed through in the reactor is air.

Claim 11 (Original): The method for preserving a catalyst according to Claim 7, wherein said temperature of the catalyst is retained 15 °C or higher and 150 °C or lower, and the gas having a water concentration of 0.5 vol% or less and containing substantially no component lowering a catalytic performance is allowed to pass through in said reactor.

Claim 12 (Original): The method for preserving a catalyst according to Claim 11, wherein the gas to be passed through in the reactor is an inert gas or oxidizing gas.

Claim 13 (Original): The method for preserving a catalyst according to Claim 12, wherein the gas to be passed through in the reactor is air.

Claim 14 (Currently Amended): The method for preserving a catalyst according to ~~any one of Claims 1 to 13~~ Claim 1, wherein said phosphorus-molybdenum-vanadium catalyst is preserved in dark ambient.

Claim 15 (Currently Amended): The method for preserving a catalyst according to ~~any one of Claims 1 to 13~~ Claim 1, wherein said phosphorus-molybdenum-vanadium catalyst is a catalyst used in producing methacrylic acid from methacrolein by catalytic oxidation in a vapor phase.

Claim 16 (Original): The method for preserving a catalyst according to Claim 14, wherein said phosphorus-molybdenum-vanadium catalyst is a catalyst used in producing methacrylic acid from methacrolein by catalytic oxidation in a vapor phase.

Claim 17 (Currently Amended): The method for preserving a catalyst according to Claim 15, wherein said phosphorus-molybdenum-vanadium catalyst is represented by the following formula (I):

$$P_aMo_bV_cCu_dX_eY_fZ_gO_h \qquad (I)$$

wherein, P, Mo, V, Cu and O represent phosphorus, molybdenum, vanadium, copper and oxygen, respectively[[,]]; X represents at least one element selected from the group consisting of antimony, bismuth, arsenic, germanium, zirconium, tellurium, silver, selenium, silicon, tungsten and boron[[,]]; Y represents at least one element selected from the group consisting of iron, zinc, chromium, magnesium, tantalum, cobalt, manganese, barium, gallium, cerium

and lanthanum[[,]]; ~~and~~ Z represents at least one element selected from the group consisting of potassium, rubidium and cesium[[.]]; and a, b, c, d, e, f, g and h represent an atom ratio of each element, and when b=12, then, a=0.5 to 3, c=0.01 to 3, d=0.01 to 2, e=0 to 3, f=0 to 3, g=0.01 to 3[[,]]; and h represents an atom ratio of oxygen necessary for satisfying an atomic valence of each component.

Claim 18 (Original): The method for preserving a catalyst according to Claim 16, wherein said phosphorus-molybdenum-vanadium catalyst is represented by the following formula (I):

$$P_aMo_bV_cCu_dX_eY_fZ_gO_h \qquad (I)$$

wherein, P, Mo, V, Cu and O represent phosphorus, molybdenum, vanadium, copper and oxygen, respectively[[,]]; X represents at least one element selected from the group consisting of antimony, bismuth, arsenic, germanium, zirconium, tellurium, silver, selenium, silicon, tungsten and boron[[,]]; Y represents at least one element selected from the group consisting of iron, zinc, chromium, magnesium, tantalum, cobalt, manganese, barium, gallium, cerium and lanthanum[[,]]; ~~and~~ Z represents at least one element selected from the group consisting of potassium, rubidium and cesium[[.]]; and a, b, c, d, e, f, g and h represent an atom ratio of each element, and when b=12, then, a=0.5 to 3, c=0.01 to 3, d=0.01 to 2, e=0 to 3, f=0 to 3, g=0.01 to 3[[,]]; and h represents an atom ratio of oxygen necessary for satisfying an atomic valence of each component.

Claim 19 (New): The method for preserving a catalyst according to Claim 2, wherein said phosphorus-molybdenum-vanadium catalyst is a catalyst used in producing methacrylic acid from methacrolein by catalytic oxidation in a vapor phase.

Claim 20 (New): The method for preserving a catalyst according to Claim 4, wherein said phosphorus-molybdenum-vanadium catalyst is a catalyst used in producing methacrylic acid from methacrolein by catalytic oxidation in a vapor phase.

Claim 21 (New): The method for preserving a catalyst according to Claim 6, wherein said phosphorus-molybdenum-vanadium catalyst is a catalyst used in producing methacrylic acid from methacrolein by catalytic oxidation in a vapor phase.

Claim 22 (New): The method for preserving a catalyst according to Claim 7, wherein said phosphorus-molybdenum-vanadium catalyst is a catalyst used in producing methacrylic acid from methacrolein by catalytic oxidation in a vapor phase.

Claim 23 (New): The method for preserving a catalyst according to Claim 8, wherein said phosphorus-molybdenum-vanadium catalyst is a catalyst used in producing methacrylic acid from methacrolein by catalytic oxidation in a vapor phase.

Claim 24 (New): The method for preserving a catalyst according to Claim 19, wherein said phosphorus-molybdenum-vanadium catalyst is represented by the following formula (I):

$$P_aMo_bV_cCu_dX_eY_fZ_gO_h \qquad (I)$$

wherein, P, Mo, V, Cu and O represent phosphorus, molybdenum, vanadium, copper and oxygen, respectively; X represents at least one element selected from the group consisting of antimony, bismuth, arsenic, germanium, zirconium, tellurium, silver, selenium, silicon, tungsten and boron; Y represents at least one element selected from the group consisting of iron, zinc, chromium, magnesium, tantalum, cobalt, manganese, barium, gallium, cerium and

lanthanum; Z represents at least one element selected from the group consisting of potassium, rubidium and cesium; and a, b, c, d, e, f, g and h represent an atom ratio of each element, and when b=12, then, a=0.5 to 3, c=0.01 to 3, d=0.01 to 2, e=0 to 3, f=0 to 3, g=0.01 to 3, and h represents an atom ratio of oxygen necessary for satisfying an atomic valence of each component.

Claim 25 (New): The method for preserving a catalyst according to Claim 20, wherein said phosphorus-molybdenum-vanadium catalyst is represented by the following formula (I):

$$P_aMo_bV_cCu_dX_eY_fZ_gO_h \qquad (I)$$

wherein, P, Mo, V, Cu and O represent phosphorus, molybdenum, vanadium, copper and oxygen, respectively; X represents at least one element selected from the group consisting of antimony, bismuth, arsenic, germanium, zirconium, tellurium, silver, selenium, silicon, tungsten and boron; Y represents at least one element selected from the group consisting of iron, zinc, chromium, magnesium, tantalum, cobalt, manganese, barium, gallium, cerium and lanthanum; Z represents at least one element selected from the group consisting of potassium, rubidium and cesium; and a, b, c, d, e, f, g and h represent an atom ratio of each element, and when b=12, then, a=0.5 to 3, c=0.01 to 3, d=0.01 to 2, e=0 to 3, f=0 to 3, g=0.01 to 3, and h represents an atom ratio of oxygen necessary for satisfying an atomic valence of each component.

Claim 26 (New): The method for preserving a catalyst according to Claim 21, wherein said phosphorus-molybdenum-vanadium catalyst is represented by the following formula (I):

$$P_aMo_bV_cCu_dX_eY_fZ_gO_h \qquad (I)$$

wherein, P, Mo, V, Cu and O represent phosphorus, molybdenum, vanadium, copper and oxygen, respectively; X represents at least one element selected from the group consisting of antimony, bismuth, arsenic, germanium, zirconium, tellurium, silver, selenium, silicon, tungsten and boron; Y represents at least one element selected from the group consisting of iron, zinc, chromium, magnesium, tantalum, cobalt, manganese, barium, gallium, cerium and lanthanum; Z represents at least one element selected from the group consisting of potassium, rubidium and cesium; and a, b, c, d, e, f, g and h represent an atom ratio of each element, and when b=12, then, a=0.5 to 3, c=0.01 to 3, d=0.01 to 2, e=0 to 3, f=0 to 3, g=0.01 to 3, and h represents an atom ratio of oxygen necessary for satisfying an atomic valence of each component.

Claim 27 (New): The method for preserving a catalyst according to Claim 22, wherein said phosphorus-molybdenum-vanadium catalyst is represented by the following formula (I):

$$P_aMo_bV_cCu_dX_eY_fZ_gO_h \qquad (I)$$

wherein, P, Mo, V, Cu and O represent phosphorus, molybdenum, vanadium, copper and oxygen, respectively, X represents at least one element selected from the group consisting of antimony, bismuth, arsenic, germanium, zirconium, tellurium, silver, selenium, silicon, tungsten and boron, Y represents at least one element selected from the group consisting of iron, zinc, chromium, magnesium, tantalum, cobalt, manganese, barium, gallium, cerium and lanthanum, Z represents at least one element selected from the group consisting of potassium, rubidium and cesium, a, b, c, d, e, f, g and h represent an atom ratio of each element, and when b=12, then, a=0.5 to 3, c=0.01 to 3, d=0.01 to 2, e=0 to 3, f=0 to 3, g=0.01 to 3, and h represents an atom ratio of oxygen necessary for satisfying an atomic valence of each component.

Claim 28 (New): The method for preserving a catalyst according to Claim 23, wherein said phosphorus-molybdenum-vanadium catalyst is represented by the following formula (I):

$$P_aMo_bV_cCu_dX_eY_fZ_gO_h \qquad (I)$$

wherein, P, Mo, V, Cu and O represent phosphorus, molybdenum, vanadium, copper and oxygen, respectively; X represents at least one element selected from the group consisting of antimony, bismuth, arsenic, germanium, zirconium, tellurium, silver, selenium, silicon, tungsten and boron; Y represents at least one element selected from the group consisting of iron, zinc, chromium, magnesium, tantalum, cobalt, manganese, barium, gallium, cerium and lanthanum; Z represents at least one element selected from the group consisting of potassium, rubidium and cesium; and a, b, c, d, e, f, g and h represent an atom ratio of each element, and when b=12, then, a=0.5 to 3, c=0.01 to 3, d=0.01 to 2, e=0 to 3, f=0 to 3, g=0.01 to 3, and h represents an atom ratio of oxygen necessary for satisfying an atomic valence of each component.